



# San Juan Public Lands People

News of and for current and past  
San Juan Public Lands  
employees & partners

*March, 2009 Issue*



San Juan National Forest  
San Juan BLM Field Office

## Martinez is New Assistant Center Manager for Engineering

**DURANGO** – Benerito (Ben) Martinez, the San Juan's new Forest Engineer, will arrive this spring from Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he most recently served as Facilities Engineering Group Leader for the USFS Southwestern Regional Office.

"I'll be using my experience and networks from working at a Regional Office and with the Washington Office to advance the San Juan's programs and projects," Ben says. "I've heard great things about your quality engineering team."

Ben has also served as Engineering Group Leader for Region 3. His past federal career includes work at Kirtland Air Force Base as Chief of Environment, Safety and Health for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (formerly the Defense Nuclear Agency born out of the Manhattan Project), and Environmental Engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Albuquerque.

Ben holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Civil Engineering, with an Environmental Minor, from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico. He and wife, Laura, have two children; Meaghan, soon to be 20, and Gavin, soon to be 16. The family enjoys biking, hiking, camping, boating, and other outdoor activities. Ben has also been a basketball coach and referee for about 20 years.

"As always, it's the people that make a job fun and exciting," Ben says. "I look forward to making new friends and joining the best engineering team in Region 2."

- Ann Bond



## Employee News Inside This Issue

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# PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS

## Jennifer Heads South



**DURANGO** - Jennifer Burns, San Juan's Landscape Architect, left in February for Sedona, Arizona, to be Recreation Staff Officer on the Coconino NF Red Rock RD.

Jennifer moved to Durango in 2006 from the Arapaho Roosevelt NF, where she was Forest Landscape Architect. Over her 27-year federal career, Jennifer has worked for the Mount Hood, Deschutes and Prescott NFs, as well as Grand Canyon National Park. She also worked previously on the Red Rock RD as Landscape Architect in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

"I'm looking forward to getting out of the office and back on the ground in an area that receives four million visitors per year," Jennifer says.

Originally from Massachusetts, Jennifer holds a Bachelor's degree in Renewable Natural Resource Management and a Masters degree in Landscape Architecture, both from the University of Arizona in Tucson.

- Ann Bond

## Hotshot News

**DURANGO** - Jay Godson, Squad Boss for the San Juan Interagency Hotshot Crew over the past two years, is now Assistant Superintendent. Jay's pre-fire season duties include seasonal hiring, getting vehicles ready, and purchasing supplies. During fire season, he'll be responsible for directing three squads of six people in fire line operations.

Jay came to the San Juan in 2004 from the Pike NF, where he was a senior firefighter for the Pike Interagency Hotshots. Prior to that, he was assistant engine foreman and seasonal fuels crew member for the Payette NF. He also served as a crew member for the Baker River Hotshots. Jay holds a degree in Forestry from Colorado State University. He enjoys mountain biking, powder skiing, and float trips.

"I'm very excited about the upcoming fire season and look forward to working with the returning faces and those new to the crew," Jay says.

The San Juan Hotshots are made up of 20 career and seasonal Forest Service employees, who respond to wildfires across the country from April to October. The San Juan Hotshots crew is one of 93 interagency hotshot crews sponsored across the country by the USFS, National Park Service, BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and states.

"We're available 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the season, and typically spend most of the summer on the road," Jay says.

"We respond to wildland fire incidents, but are also available for other risk assignments."



Jay Godson on the Dark Three Fire, Siskiyou Complex, Northern California, 2008

## - Cornelius is New Dad -

In other Hot Shot News, Jim Cornelius is pleased to announce the birth of his daughter, Linda Ann Cornelius. Lindy was born on January 14, 2009, weighing in at 8 pounds 3 ounces.

"I may be biased as her dad, but I'm pretty sure she is the most beautiful baby in the world," Jim says. "Amy and I feel truly blessed and would like to extend our thanks and love to all of our friends and family."

- Ann Bond





## PUBLIC LANDS CENTER NEWS



## Missing Mickey

**DURANGO** - Mickey Romero, who worked for the Columbine RD and San Juan Public Lands Center from 1993 until last year, passed away on December 31, 2008.

"I talked with Mickey and his son on Christmas Eve, and Mickey said, 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.' I wanted to be sure and let you all know that he was thinking of us here at the office," says Annett Hitchell, San Juan Engineering Administrative Assistant.

No job was too big or too small for Mickey. He could do it all - rock work, woodwork, concrete work, mechanics, plumbing, and bobcat operation. He enjoyed his time in the field, whether he was handling trash pickup or recreation maintenance jobs in La Plata Canyon and at Haviland and Andrew lakes.

"No one ever had to tell Mickey to get to work," says Pete Merkel, San Juan Civil Engineering Technician. "I remember how diligently he tried to save the landscape trees at the office. He would drag a hose or haul buckets to water the trees that were on the other side of the fence in the vehicle compound."

A Durango native, Mickey enlisted in the Army when he was 18 and served in combat in the Infantry during the Korean War.

Over the years, he worked in construction, on the railroads, and as a cement finisher.

"Mickey was my hero and always will be," says Randy Ball, Public Lands Center Fleet Mechanic. "He was probably the hardest working man I ever met ... and a person with a lot of knowledge and wisdom. It was a great pleasure knowing, and working, with Mickey."

Mickey also knew how to have fun during his time off work and had a lifelong love of fishing, hunting, walking and exploring the outdoors.

We all miss his smile and enthusiasm.

-Ann Bond



## Clay STEPs into Hydrology

**DURANGO** - Clay Kampf is interning as a Hydrology Technician with San Juan Hydrologist Kelly Palmer. Last summer, Clay worked with the San Juan's Hydrology Crew collecting field data on springs in the Animas Watershed as a Fort Lewis College intern from Mountain Studies Institute.

At the end of that internship, Kelly signed Clay on as a Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) employee. The STEP program allows students to gain experience with the USFS while attending college. His appointment allows him to work part-time through 2009.

Clay has lived in Durango for the past 15 years and is attending Fort Lewis College as a junior working toward an Environmental Biology Degree. He plans to graduate in 2011. He is married to Brenna Kampf, Legal Instruments Examiner for the BLM in the PLC.

"I'm thankful for the wide variety of new information I've learned in this position," Clay says. "In the coming months, I look forward to another field season and being responsible for new tasks."

- Ann Bond

## OTHER NEWS



(From left to right) San Juan Cultural Program Lead Julie Coleman celebrates with John Fowler, President's Advisory Council for Historic Preservation; Ann Pritzlaff, Advisory Council for Historic Preservation; and Steve Sherwood, USFS Rocky Mountain Region.

### Preserving America

**DURANGO** - Preserve America, an Administration initiative encouraging and supporting community efforts to preserve America's cultural and natural heritage, has presented awards to two San Juan Public Lands programs.

The Chimney Rock Interpretive Association was designated a 2009 Preserve America Steward in recognition of its interpretive program at Chimney Rock Archaeological Area. The Southwest Colorado Cultural Site Stewardship Program was recognized for its site stewards who monitor BLM and USFS archaeological sites. The awards were presented in February at the Colorado Preservation Conference.

Preserve America's goals are to encourage a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthen regional identities and local pride; increase local participation in preserving cultural and natural heritage assets, and support the economic vitality of communities.

- Ann Bond

## COLUMBINE NEWS

### Carolyn Retires

**BAYFIELD** - Carolyn Long, Columbine Outfitter and Guide Administrator since 2003, has taken early retirement after 21 years with the District. Carolyn was originally hired in 1988 as an Administrative Clerk for the Pine RD. Over the years, she also worked as a Support Services Supervisor and Visitor Information Specialist. Her federal career began in 1979 working for the Bureau of Reclamation as Mail Clerk.

Her eldest son, Calvin, 26, and wife, Debra, will make Carolyn a grandmother in June. Carolyn also has another son, Cameron, who is 20. Carolyn and Ron Klatt, retired Columbine Fire Management Officer, plan to travel but will remain living in the area, where we're sure to see them out hiking, backpacking, skiing, etc.

"I've enjoyed working on the Columbine and will miss everyone a lot, especially Daisy, EZ and Opus (the District's equine crew)," Carolyn says. I've really enjoyed working with the Columbine outfitters and their many different activities and personalities."

- Ann Bond



### Shawna Returns



**BAYFIELD** - Shawna Legarza has returned to the San Juan as Columbine Fire Management Officer, after spending the past year as Grand Junction Dispatch Center Manager. Her new duties include collective management of daily fire operations on the unit.

Prior to relocating to Grand Junction, she served as San Juan Interagency Hotshot Crew Superintendent from 2002 to 2007 in Durango. Shawna has more than 21 years of fire experience, including work as Fire Suppression Specialist, Fire Staff Officer, and on BLM helitack and engine crews in Alaska.

Shawna graduated from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas with a Bachelor's degree in Teaching and a Master's in Kinesiology. She also holds a degree in Fire Management from Boise State and is working on a Doctorate in Psychology from the University of Colorado.

"I'm passionate about training and safety and look forward to the challenges of the position and renewing old acquaintances," Shawna says.

- Stan Sparks



## COLUMBINE NEWS

## Scott's New on the Hand Crew

**BAYFIELD** - Scott Dehnisch is the new Columbine Assistant Initial Attack Hand Crew Foreman. He hails from the Nez Perce NF Clearwater RD in Grangeville, Idaho, where he worked as Senior Firefighter/Squad Leader since 2007. Scott's duties on the Columbine will include supervising members of the hand crew and serving as training coordinator for the District Fire Program.

Scott began his USFS career in 2002 as a seasonal for the Bitterroot NF on the Sula RD Initial Attack Hand Crew. In 2003, he accepted a permanent position on the Nez Perce NF and detailed to the Bitterroot NF Heli-Rappellers. The following year he was again detailed, this time to Great Falls, Montana, to work with the Lewis & Clark Interagency Hotshot Crew. He returned to the Nez Perce in 2006 as a Senior Firefighter/Squad Leader on the Initial Attack Hand Crew and worked the following year as Acting Engine Assistant.

Scott is a graduate of Baylor University in Texas, where he received a Bachelor's degree in Political and Environmental Science, with a focus on aquifer hydrology. He is also currently a Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician Basic with collateral duties in the Disaster Assistance Support Program for the USFS. Scott enjoys Ultimate Frisbee, hiking, camping, climbing, running, playing baseball, traveling and meeting new people.

- Stanley Sparks



## PAGOSA NEWS

## Jackie's Movin' On

**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - Jackie Heesacker is leaving the San Juan this spring to take a position as Assistant Helicopter Manager for Sandia Helitack on the Cibola NF in Tijeras, New Mexico.

Jackie began her USFS career as a Wilderness/Trails seasonal on the Ouray RD of the GMUG. She came to the San Juan in 1993 to work in trails on the old Animas (now Columbine) RD. Jackie moved into Fire the following year and has worked since with crews at Pagosa and Bayfield and with Helitack in Durango.

Jackie also worked with the Lassen Hotshots in California in 1998, and later on a Type 3 engine on the Lassen NF. She returned to the Pagosa RD as Engine Captain in 2000. Jackie sees this change as a great opportunity and is looking forward to a getting back into aviation.

- Phyllis Wheaton

Firefighters  
Go Back to School

**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - San Juan firefighters Jesse Jones and Jake Thelen visited Mrs. Reidberger's first-grade class at Pagosa Springs Elementary School this winter. They talked with 23 students about fire safety and wildland firefighting, breaking the class into squads that listened to firefighter instructions and watched a fire-shelter demonstration.

Students wore firefighter hardhats and protective yellow Nomex shirts, saw the tools required to perform the job, and even carried firefighter packs and gear. The lesson ended with a "crew" picture in front of Pagosa RD's wildland fire engine.

- Phyllis Wheaton



## PAGOSA NEWS

### Fred is Fuels Tech



**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - Fred Ellis is now working as Fuels Technician in Pagosa, responsible for lay out and inspection of mechanical treatments and contracts, assistance with thinning operations, and support of fire management and prescribed fire.

Originally from Georgia, Fred pursued a career in law enforcement and served as a police officer in metro Atlanta for 17 years. In Flagstaff, Arizona, he earned a degree in criminal justice from Northern Arizona University, while working summers as a firefighter on an engine and helicopter rappel crew on the Kaibab NF.

In 2001, Fred began the first of five seasons working with the San Juan Fire Ecology crew, collecting data from fire-scar samples for a fire history of the San Juan NF. In 2007, he took a position in the Durango Interagency Fire Dispatch Center, but due to a combination of needs in fire management matched by his skills, spent most of the season as Engine Boss.

Fred's wife, Pauline, is currently the San Juan's Travel Management Coordinator. Family activities center around their daughter, Brooke, 12, who is active with Girl Scouts, music, and sports.

- Phyllis Wheaton



### Scott is Timber Crew Super

**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - After two seasons as a member of Pagosa's Timber Marking Crew and one season as a temporary Crew Supervisor, Scott Kohler has obtained a permanent position as Timber Crew Supervisor. He now oversees timber marking and stand-improvement projects for both the Pagosa and Columbine offices. He'll also be assisting with sale layout.

Scott is a Type 2 Firefighter working toward qualifying as Squad Boss. A native of Colorado Springs, he holds a degree in Natural Resource Management from Colorado State University. During college, he worked summers on the Canyon Lakes RD of the Roosevelt NF. In 2005-2006, he handled fire-mitigation work for a private firm in Colorado Springs.

Scott enjoys working and playing outdoors, especially hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

- Phyllis Wheaton

### Karl Handles the Heavy Stuff



**PAGOSA SPRINGS** - Karl Whitacre, Pagosa Equipment Operator, is an Engineering employee responsible for heavy equipment work for Pagosa and Columbine. Originally from Florida, Karl has a varied history that includes bronc riding, Navy communications, cattle ranching, farming, calf and team roping, serving in the National Guard, and work as a peri-natal and neo-natal respiratory therapist.

After his initial retirement in 1998, Karl earned a degree in Fire Science from the University of Missouri, and worked as a medic/fire fighter for a fire protection district. He also has worked as a police officer. In 2002, he was hired as a seasonal Fuels Crew Member for the Pagosa RD. He moved to Columbine in 2003 as a permanent Range Technician.

Karl and his wife, Jamie, live in Pagosa Springs, where they enjoy fishing, horseback riding, snow shoeing and a bit of dancing. They've been known to head to the Florida Keys and coastal Texas for a bit of saltwater fishing when the snow gets deep. They have a son, a daughter, and three grandchildren.

-Phyllis Wheaton



## DOLORES NEWS



## Saying Good Bye to Juliet

**DOLORES** - Juliet Craik, resident of Cahone, passed away on Tuesday, February 10, 2009, at the age of 59, after losing her battle with cancer. Juliet was born in Beaufort, South Carolina to Mary and James Craik.

As a child of an Air Force Officer, she lived in many different places including Georgia, Alabama, Cambridge England, Texas, Iowa, and Minnesota, but at age 19 she made her way out west to be near the mountains of Colorado.

Juliet had worked for the Forest Service since 2001. Most recently she worked at the Dolores Public Lands Office as a Resource Assistant. Prior to transferring to

Dolores, she worked for the Durango Public Lands Center as a Business Manager. She also worked for Mesa Verde National Park and the Montezuma Water Company.

Juliet will be remembered as a strong and independent woman who loved horses, hiking, reading and the beautiful mountains where she chose to live throughout her adult life. She was an avid equestrian and enjoyed her pets, Hap and Pretzel, her dogs; Buddy her horse; and several cats.

- Toni Kelly

Kathy Awarded for *Creative Solutions*

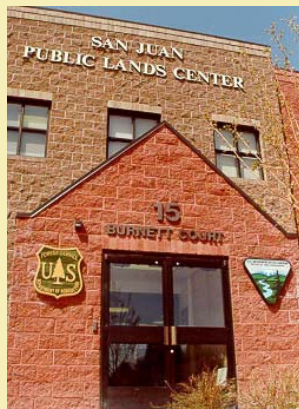
**DENVER** - Kathy Nickell, DPLO Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, has received the Creative Solutions Award from the USFS Rocky Mountain Regional Office for developing a unique and proactive wildlife program under Service First.

Kathy was noted for completing a programmatic environmental assessment to set priorities for managing desert bighorn sheep, elk, deer, and Gunnison sage-grouse habitat over the next ten years. With cooperators, Kathy was able to secure nearly \$750,000 in partnership funding for conservation improvements and mitigation of impacts to wildlife habitat from energy development, timbering, and livestock grazing.

Kathy's wildlife program emphasizes internal and external partnerships. She has engaged a variety of partners including the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Quail Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and local and regional Colorado Habitat Partnership Programs.

- Melanie Woolover, Wildlife Program Leader, USFS Rocky Mountain Region

**LET US KNOW  
WHAT YOU  
THINK!**



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Read this and past issues online at:  
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National Forest information online at:  
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## DOLORES NEWS

### Glade Project Wins *Wings Over the Americas*

**DOLORES** - The DPLO has been recognized nationally for its Glade Wetlands Restoration Project. *Wings Across the Americas* is a USFS program that awards employees and their partners across the country for outstanding achievements in conservation of birds, bats and butterflies.

The Glade Wetlands Restoration Project is a multi-year program to recover and restore five large and unique wetlands on the Glade, a semi-arid area of southwestern Colorado. Glade Lake, the largest wetland on the San Juan NF at 50 acres in size, is the centerpiece.

Since 2005, nearly 300 acres of wetland and upland habitat have been improved in the area. The riparian vegetation and shallow waters offer yearround foraging habitat for dabbling ducks, waterfowl, and other riparian-dependent species.



**Aerial photo of 50-acre Glade Lake, the largest wetland on the San Juan NF.**



**The DPLO hydrology crew examines a headcut repair at Glade Lake, which is now encircled by a 280-acre wetland enclosure fence to protect wetland and upland nesting habitat.**

"We especially want to recognize the local Colorado Division of Wildlife office for providing funding and expertise, and local ranchers for their cooperation and assistance in looking for new opportunities for grazing management," said Steve Beverlin, DPLO Manager.

The project is being implemented through a partnership with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, local Wetlands Focus Group, San Juan Mountains Association, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, landowners, and ranchers.

Kristen Philbrook, DPLO wildlife biologist, and Shauna Jensen, DPLO hydrologist, will accept the award at the North American Wildlife Conference in Arlington, Virginia later this month, on behalf of the DPLO and its partners.

For more information, go to: [www.fs.fed.us/global/wings](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wings).

- Ann Bond

"We've seen positive vegetation responses within a year of excluding livestock from these important wetland and upland areas and anticipate increased use by wildlife in the coming years," said Kathy Nickell, DPLO Supervisory Wildlife Biologist. "This project is a testament to a group of dedicated employees and their partners who wanted to see this important area protected and maintained."

Team members have worked to reconstruct fencing to exclude livestock from sensitive areas and relocate a corral. Dams and spillways have been repaired, and natural drainage features restored. Vegetation recovery, waterfowl use, and nesting success are being monitored, and two new stock ponds are under design. Future plans call for the decommissioning of two roads and the development of a wildlife-viewing area.



**Left to right: DPLO employees Kristen Philbrook, Gary Ferdinando, Shauna Jensen, Elaine Sherman, and Annett Joseph represent the team working on the Glade Wetlands Restoration project.**



## AHC/CANM NEWS



**Molly Ray**

She also assisted with setting up the Old Spanish Trail exhibit. Natalie graduated from Colorado College last year with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. She plans to attend graduate school in the near future to study archaeology. Natalie loves to travel, spend time outdoors, and work on various handicrafts.

## Heritage Center Interns Help Out

**DOLORES** – Interns helped the Anasazi Heritage Center staff make it through the winter once again. Exhibits Intern Molly Ray has worked at museums across the country since graduating in 2007 from the University of Arkansas with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. During her internship, Molly helped install the Old Spanish Trail exhibit from Fort Lewis College and created three touch-drawer exhibits now on display. She is now working with the Curation staff on another internship. Molly plans to work toward a graduate degree in Museum Studies and pursue a career in the museum field.

Natalie Fast worked in Curation, cataloging research artifacts and maintaining museum exhibits and archives.



**Natalie Fast**

- David Kill



## Eric's Photos Transform

**DOLORES** - Eric LaPrice, Dolores NEPA Coordinator, was the winner of the new *Transformative Change* category in the Eighth Annual National Public Lands Day Volunteer Photo Contest.

Eric's award-winning photographs were taken of the Goodman Fire Area project in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, where volunteers transformed a road into a natural area by replanting native vegetation.

Winners received a gift basket and \$500 donation to the projects affiliated with winning photographs. Eric's photos are on display at National Public Lands Day website, [www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org), and electronic newsletter.

Eric has contributed photos to the San Juan NF webpage, as well as the USFS regional and national Annual Fall Color Reports. Eric has also done well in local community shows, and his work is on display at the Cortez Recreation Center.

- Toni Kelly



**Eric's photo of an old roadbed in Canyons of the Ancients before reclamation.**



**Eric's photo of the same area after volunteers reclaimed the old road bed.**

## MISC NEWS

### San Juan Cowgirls in Mexico

**COPPER CANYON, MEXICO** - San Juan Hydrologist Kelly Palmer (left) and SJMA Volunteer Coordinator Kathe Hayes (right)



spent time on horseback this fall in the Sierra Madre of Mexico riding cross-country through the Copper Canyon country, which boasts canyons deeper

than the Grand Canyon. Kelly was along to help husband, Randy Palmer, who works as a guide. Kathe says she especially enjoyed the children.

The ride takes substantial horsemanship skills to navigate steep slopes, high drop-offs, rocky terrain, rough trails, and several days of riding and camping. Two years ago, Columbine Realty Specialist Cindy Hockelberg and San Juan Public Affairs Specialist Ann Bond also joined the Palmers on a similar route through the Copper Canyon.



## GREEN TEAM NEWS

**PLANET EARTH** - Save energy at the office by not consuming electricity when you don't need it! Computers, monitors, printers, etc., which are plugged into the wall after you shut them off, continue to draw power. That's especially wasteful when you learn that half of the energy consumed by the average desktop computer is wasted on generating heat alone.

To prevent this needless energy drain, plug your equipment into a power strip/surge protector, so you can turn it off at the power strip. If you're not going to use your computer for at least two hours, you'll save electricity. If you don't have a power strip, just unplug your equipment from the wall when not in use. You can save an average of \$90 a year by shutting down your computer equipment every night in this manner.

For short-term energy savings, turn off your monitor if you're going to be away for more than 20 minutes. For long-term energy savings, choose a laptop over a desktop computer - a laptop uses a quarter of the power required by a desktop model.

- Laurie Yeager, Green Team Coordinator



**Be Green  
At Home**

The average American produces 40,000 pounds of CO2 emissions annually. Trim your carbon footprint:

- Turn your refrigerator down.
- Set your clothes washer to the warm or cold water setting, not hot.
- Run your dishwasher only when full, and allow dishes to air dry.
- Turn down your water heater thermostat.
- Select energy-efficient models when you replace old appliances.
- Be careful not to overheat or overcool rooms.
- Clean or replace air filters, as recommended.
- Buy energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs for your most-used lights.
- Wrap your water heater in an insulating jacket.
- Use less hot water by installing low-flow shower heads.
- Weatherize your home to plug air leaks around doors and windows.
- Whenever possible, walk, bike, car pool, or use mass transit.
- When you next buy a car, choose one that gets good mileage.
- Choose reusable products over disposable ones, and recycle.